

KCI Terminal Advisory Group

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KCI Single Terminal Proposal

Greetings!

I have been following very closely the debate on building a new single terminal airport. As a long-time Kansas City resident (although I currently live in Independence), a customer, and a worker at KCI, I think I have some insight in the matter.

I am a security screener at the airport, contracted through FirstLine to TSA. I work in the Southwest gate area, and pay attention to how the flyers react to our terminal and what they see when they are waiting to depart or as they arrive. Since Southwest is the largest airline operating out of there, it gives me a chance to see how the majority of travelers see us.

And the impression they get is not a good one. While Terminal B, and Southwest in particular, has more amenities for the traveler both inside and outside the gate area, there are problems that still need to be addressed. Since I've been there the past six years, I've seen the facilities inside the gate improve. There is a restaurant that has been built in the last couple of years. The bathrooms at Gate 41 have been expanded because of complaints of long lines. Starbucks had to move inside the gate because fliers didn't want to exit security to get their coffee fix. The only problem with these little fixes is they take up precious room inside and outside the gate. During the busy season--and even when it isn't the busy season, just a convention or team coming through--it gets very crowded in the gate, with passengers sitting on the floor, looking around for a place to plug in, and complaints about the long lines at the restrooms once again. That is, if they aren't closed for maintenance. And even outside the gate, it can get crowded when people stand around an exit door waiting for loved ones to arrive, making it hard for others to get by them. Us workers are even told to never walk more than two abreast, just so others can get by us in the corridor outside the gate. And the people outside security also might walk slow and prevent others from getting by, simply because the corridors aren't large enough for large groups of people.

I know these are reasons why readers of "Travel and Leisure" magazine voted KCI the ninth worst airport in the country. Some of it had to do with a lack of amenities. Southwest has improved things in this regard, but there are some airlines where there aren't even any restrooms inside the gate, or a lot of food choices. I hear a lot of complaints from passengers about our airport.

But what about the positives that are being touted as advantages for our current configuration? The main thing I hear is something about how "convenient" our airport is. You can walk out of your car and get to the gate and through security without a lot of walking. Drop people off and they are on their way. That is, as long as there isn't a delay, or cancellation, or a missed flight. Then the loved ones who are dropped off have to wander around the place looking for something to do while they wait. I once saw four service men have to bunk down on the floor of the terminal because they missed their flight and couldn't get one until morning. Sure, drop the people off and let them go to the ticket counter, and then figure out what to do before going inside security. Many times I have had tell people inside security that if they wanted something outside the gate they would be going through security again. And they would often turn away, unless they had to smoke, of course. And as for not having to walk very far? HAH! Sure, I guess anywhere else you have to walk a long ways, but you know what? The same people who complain about the long walk at other airports probably have a treadmill at home, or they jog along a path, or

have been told by their doctor (As I have) that walking is good for you. But it seems when they get to an airport they don't want to do that.

The other objection that came up recently has to do with an armed stranger coming into the airport and start shooting. I've read that some security experts have said our three-terminal design is safer because there aren't as many people in one spot that might be victims. All well and good, but I never heard anyone propose splitting up a school into three buildings for safety reasons. Shopping malls have the same risk factor, so why don't we chop them up into three buildings? These places have had more attacks of this nature than airports have had.

I am totally for a single terminal design, as you have figured out. Because of the 9/11 attacks, our airport, once a model for others in it's design, is now not only old and in desperate need of updating, but has become inefficient since security has been tightened. The oft-quoted J.D. Powers survey was done in 2004, before the merger of many airlines shrunk our need for the space our three terminals provided. A design that meets current needs, while allowing for expansion, is worth paying for. I've been to many airports in my time and KCI is one that I believe doesn't meet the needs of the flying public. Let's get a progressive airport that would make Kansas City proud!

John Skelton

Frederick Douglass

"It is easier to build a child than fix an adult."
